

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 9681

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TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH OFFICIAL OF AMNESTY INTER-
NATIONAL (SOVIET CHAPTER)

1. SUMMARY. VLADIMIR ALBREKHT OF SOVIET CHAPTER, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, REPORTED ON CHANCES FOR ACQUITTAL OF ANDREY TVERDOKHLEBOV (SLIM), AND ON CURRENT STATE OF SOVIET CHAPTER OF AMNESTY (ONE OF DISARRAY).

2. VLADIMIR ALBREKHT HAS BEEN ONE OF THE DOZEN OR SO MEMBERS OF THE SOVIET CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SINCE ITS INCEPTION LATE IN 1974. ALONG WITH THE GROUP'S PRESIDENT, VALERIY TURCHIN, AND ITS SECRETARY, ANDREY TVERDOKHLEBOV, ALBREKHT HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN TRYING TO PROVIDE SOME KIND OF FIRM FOUNDATION FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IN THE SOVIET UNION. EMBOFF MET ALBREKHT THROUGH A MUTUAL ACQUAINTANCE ON JULY 5 AT THE MOSCOW CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE. (ALBREKHT IS NOT JEWISH.) ALBREKHT HAD ASKED HIS FRIEND TO INTRODUCE HIM TO SOMEONE FROM THE EMBASSY. HE SEEMED ANXIOUS TO TELL US OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CURRENT SAD STATE.

3. ALBREKHT RELATED THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF TVERDOKHLEBOV'S ARREST AND THE SEARCH OF HIS OWN APARTMENT DURING THE KGB CRACKDOWN ON THE CHAPTER'S MEMBERS IN APRIL 1975. AT THAT TIME
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 09681 101733Z

TURCHIN HAD TOLD THE WESTERN PRESS THAT THE MAJOR REASON

FOR THE TIMING OF THE KGB ACTION WAS THE DECREASING ATTENTION BEING PAID IN THE WEST TO THE PLIGHT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DISSIDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION.

4. ALBREKHT FELT THAT THIS WAS ONLY PART OF THE STORY, ALTHOUGH HE SAID THE KGB'S PRECEPTION OF THE DAMAGE TO THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE ABROAD WAS CERTAINLY AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN ITS DETERMINATION OF WHETHER TO ACT OR NOT. HE BELIEVED, HOWEVER, THAT MORE IMPORTANTLY THE AUTHORITIES FEARED THAT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES WOULD GET OUT OF HAND AND THAT IT WOULD BECOME THE FOCAL POINT FOR DISSIDENCE ON A BROADER SCALE THAN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT LEAD BY ACADEMICIAN SAKHAROV. TVERDOKHLEBOV WAS A KEY ELEMENT BECAUSE OF HIS DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF SOVIET LAWS AND LEGAL PRACTICE AS WELL AS HIS ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY.

5. ALBREKHT SAID OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION CONTINUED TO BE HARASSED AND THREATENED. HE HAD LOST HIS JOB AND TURCHIN HAD BEEN FRIGHTENED INTO INACTIVITY. (HE DID NOT SAY HOW.) ACCORDING TO ALBREKHT, THE SOVIET CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS CURRENTLY IN COMPLETE DISARRAY. ONLY HE IS DOING ANY MAJOR WORK. IN FACT, HIS PRINCIPAL CURRENT ACTIVITY IS PREPARING DOCUMENTS ON THE TVERDOKHLEBOV CASE FOR USE WHEN HE COMES TO TRIAL. THEY MAY ALSO BE PUBLISHED IN THE WEST AT SOME POINT. ALBREKHT SAID THERE ARE NOW NO PLANS TO STIR UP A FUSS ABOUT TVERDOKHLEBOV IN THE WESTERN PRESS, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE IT IS FEARED THIS MIGHT DAMAGE HIS ADMITTEDLY SLIM CHANCES FOR ACQUITTAL ON CHARGES OF "ANTI-SOVIET ACTIVITY." ALBREKHT INDICATED THAT THE GROUP HAD DECIDED TO GIVE THE LEGAL PROCESS A CHANCE, SO THAT LATER THE EXPECTED UNFAIR TRIAL COULD BE DOCUMENTED.

6. ALBREKHT BROACHED THE SUBJECT OF INFORMING, THROUGH THE EMBASSY, THE FORMER CIVIL RIGHT LEADER VALERY CHALIDZE OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE CASE, BUT WITH THE PROVISIO THAT NOTHING BE PUBLISHED FOR THE TIME BEING. EMBOFF SAID THAT FOR OBVIOUS REASONS WE COULD NOT SERVE AS POST OFFICE BETWEEN SOVIET DISSIDENTS HERE AND ABROAD. HE SAID HE ASSUMED THERE WERE OTHER CHANNELS FOR SUCH COMMUNICATIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 09681 101733Z

7. ALBREKHT WENT ON TO SAY THAT TVERDOKHLEBOV WAS STILL BEING HELD IN LEFORTOVO PRISON, WITHOUT VISITATION RIGHTS. NO ONE BUT THE AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO SEE HIM SINCE HIS ARREST. EVEN THE LAWYER WHO WAS TO DEFEND HIM HAD BEEN UNABLE TO DISCUSS THE CASE WITH HIM. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, ALBREKHT WAS NOT SANGUINE ABOUT TVERDOKHLEBOB'S CHANCES, NOR ABOUT THE FUTURE FOR THE SOVIET CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

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